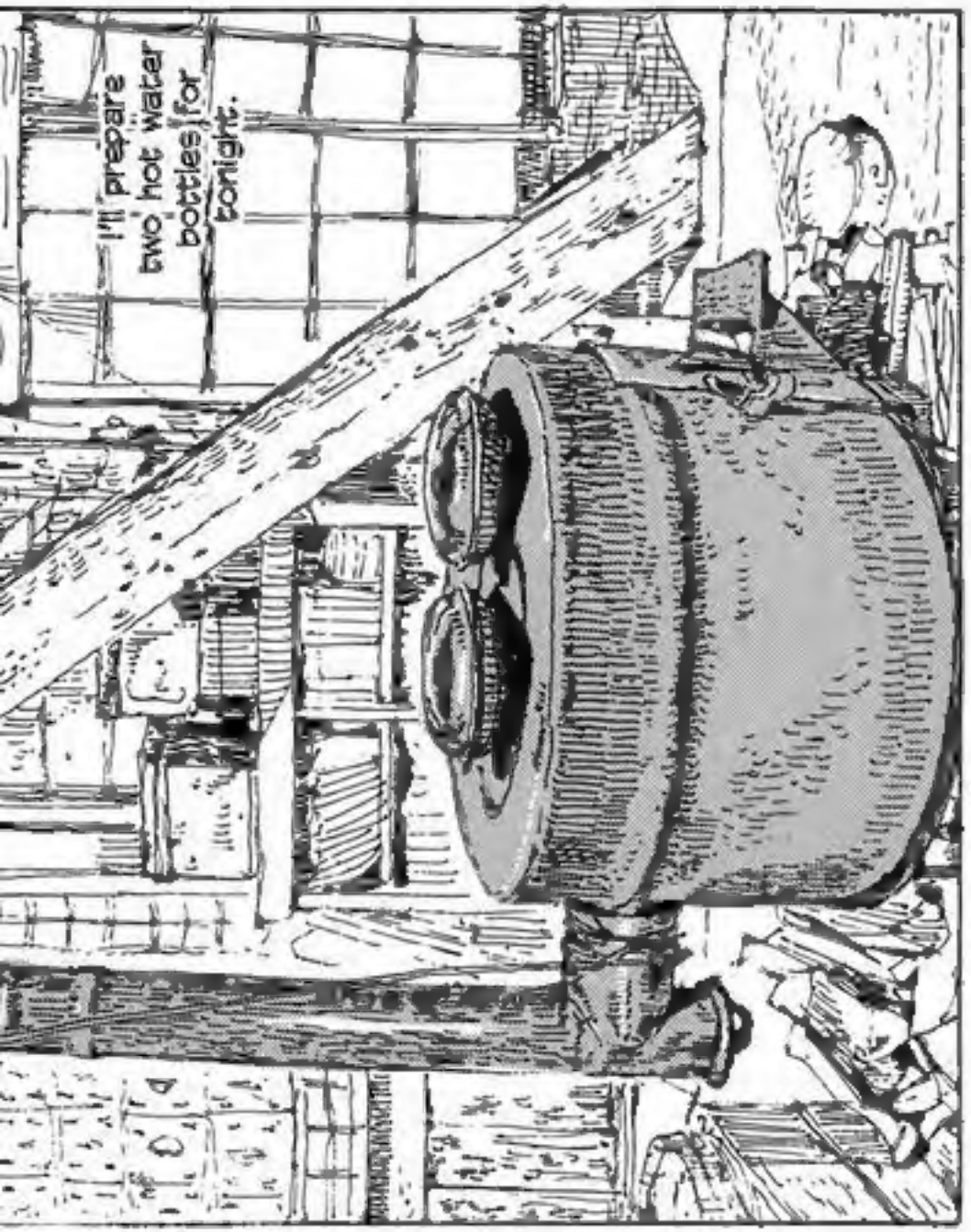
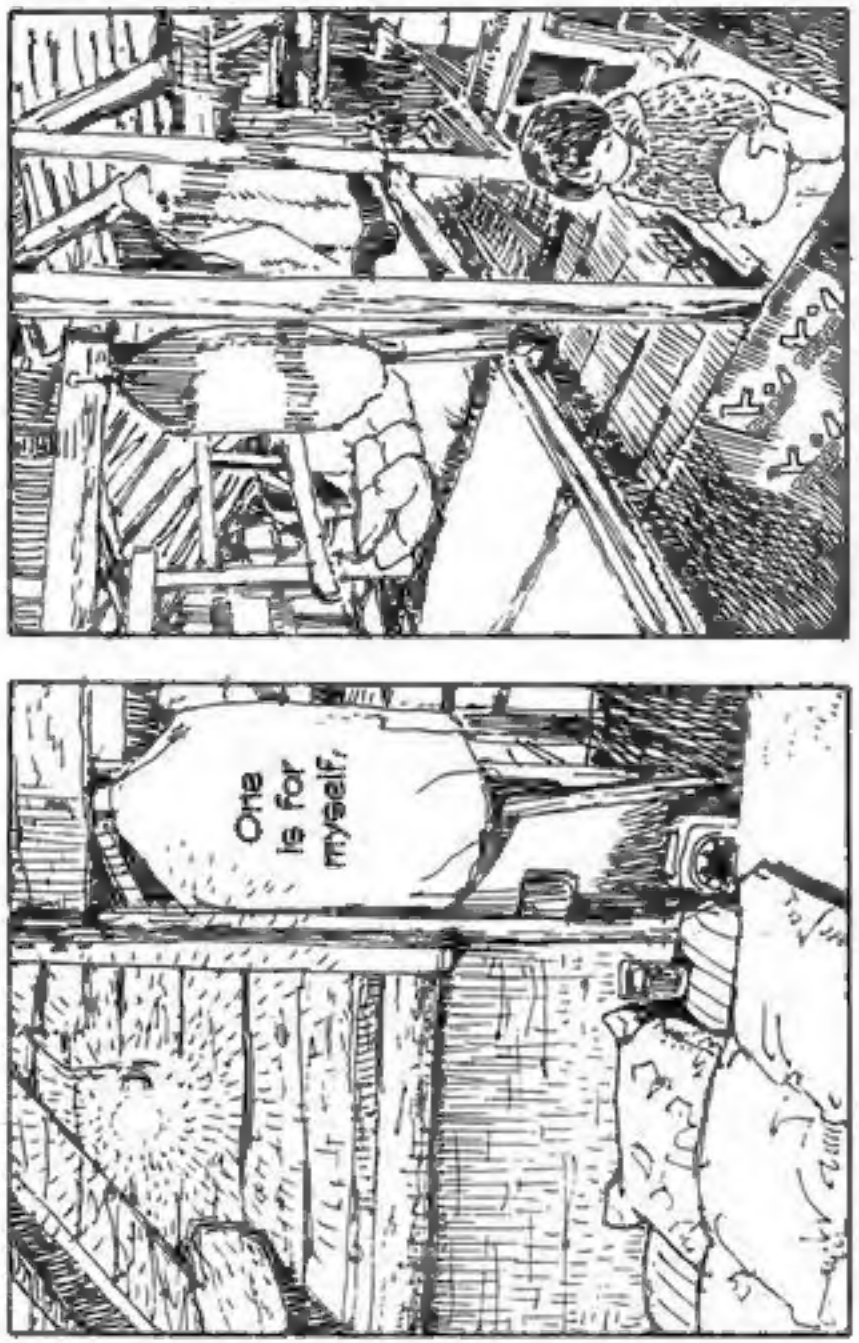
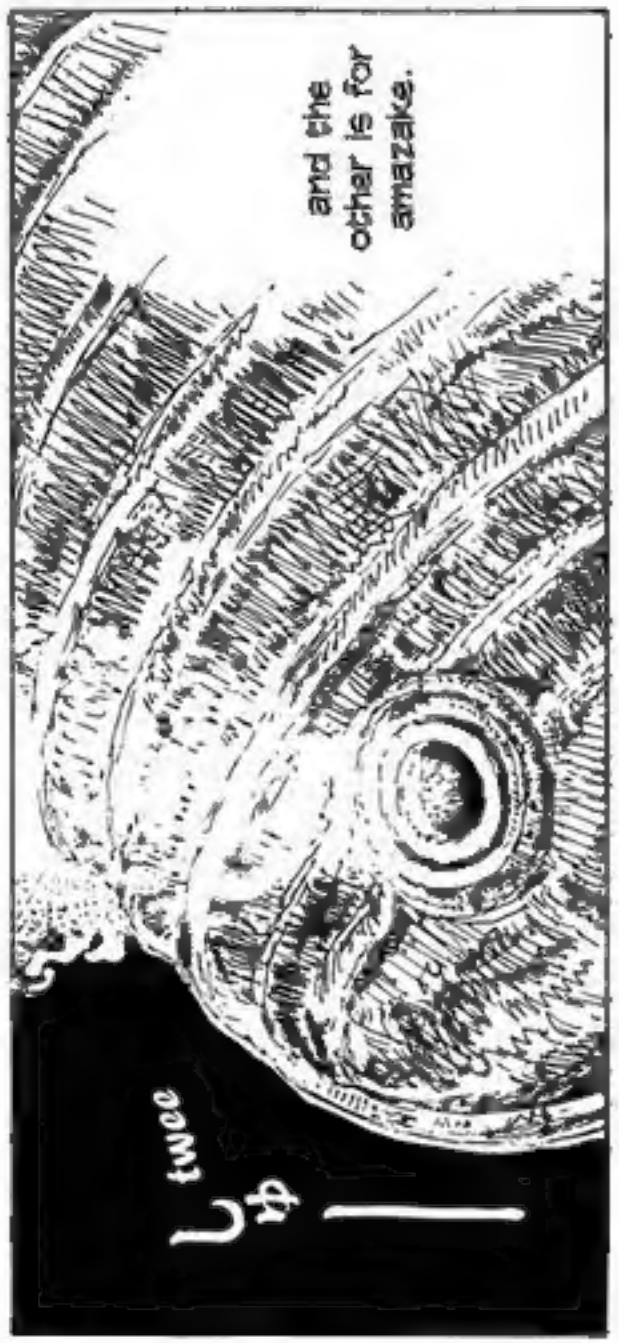






Little Forest

5th dish
Amazake

buckle down and separate the straw for hanging freeze-dried daikon or for wrapping things in.

I light the stove,

On winter nights you can't get by without amazake.

That is how these soy beans end up as natto.

While steaming these beans,

I drink amazake and keep my body warm.

and set aside the red beans and soy beans that are too small, or have been damaged by bugs.

The five of us from the women's association borrow the village's entire community center to make it.

Sorry I'm la... Wow, it's so steamy!

We've still boiling the water.

and once a year, become miso.

I've been eating too much, much.

Now, haven't you gotten plump?

I was talking about the beans, not you!

The soy beans and rice are both brought in and left to soak in water for one night.

the kitchens in new houses are too cramped for making miso.

Though large farm houses from by-gone days might be a different story.

It's making a crackling sound.

The rice gets steamed.

We can go take a smoke.

Then it's not ready yet.

The beans get boiled.

but if I put the lid back onnit, I won't be able to git to it.

It's not boilin' 'nough.

Here, pass the tsukemono around.

Lunch time.

The nishime is really good!

Who made it?

Is this in the back?

In order to preserve the humidity and temperature,

we place it in the fermentation room.

I wish whoever put this in remembered about it.

We let the rice cool down a little after it's finished steaming, and we mix in the koji fungi.

I thought so.

Yep.

Are these tea leaves from here?

Smoke (break time).

I shape them into mounds,

I hear you can put this in miso ramen and it tastes really yummy!

Ohh...?

I wonder if you can make udon with this machine?

we put it through the mincer,

When the soy beans are soft enough to crush with your ring finger,

How-zit?

Take a bite.

and put it back in the room again.

We mix the fungi in, add more water,

I'm just doing it like how I was taught to.

I can do just fine without that.

If you don't make it like dis it ain't gon' turn out good.

and leave them to cool.

← The next day

We roast the beans that the people who couldn't come ask us to cook for them, put it through the mincer and shape them into mounds...

Lunch.

Yay!

One mouthful per person!

I brought some miso ramen so everyone can try some.

Smoke.

Your back must be aching.

Mix the koji with salt.

Nah, she's still young.

Now is the time to make sure you remember to prepare a small amount of koji fungi.

Mmm... It's sweet. Give it a taste.

Look at how nice it looks.

The last day.

While adjusting the amount of moisture.

This feels like actual minced meat. Like burger meat.

Mix it up really, really well

and mix them with koji again.

Can't we do something with these?

Like dengaku style.

What if we put some miso on it and bake it?

We crush the bean mounds.

You did a good job, you must be tired.

Don't forget to stand up for yourself.

You're the one who's the most fussy of us all.

Your ears are probably tired from hearing all that bickering, right, Ichiko-chan?

That's it for the preparations.

Ahh what a day.

Cover it with a layer of salt.

Tie it so it's airtight, and weigh it down.

We start using it after a year has passed.

What we're eating now is the portion we made last year.

Ahhh my back is starting to hurt!

Pack it in tight so air doesn't get into it.

CLENCH

CLENCH

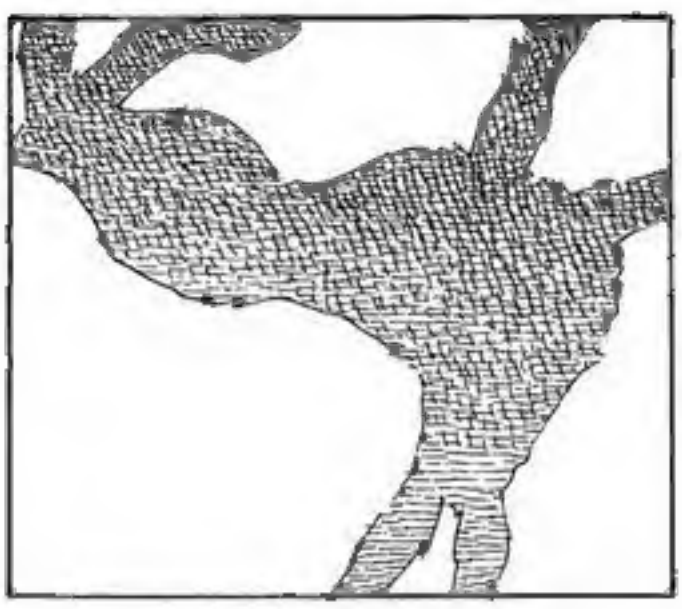
Don't use too much power and knock it over!

thmp

Thank you for the food.

A night with a full moon.

It's as bright as if it were midday.



It's going to get colder...

The parts of the squash that were still edible wouldn't soften property if stewed.

Snap

It looked like a sponge.

The sweet potato that I had stored completely froze through and went bad.

Keep it warm overnight in a cardboard box with some floor cushions, blankets, and some hot water bottles.

Now mix in the miso koji.

Heat up some rice porridge and let it cool off.

until you're able to draw three semi-circles with your pinky.

I should go and prepare some amazake ...

Carefully heat it up,

If you don't boil it after you get it to taste to your liking, it'll continue fermenting and become sour.

By the afternoon, it'll be proper amazake.

The next morning it'll have cooled down, so warm it up again to get the koji going.

Mmm, just a little longer.

It's sweet and warm and just relaxes your body.

Ahh hhh hh h...

and serve it with some pickled cucumbers or other pickled greens.

Amazake made with rich mochi rice...

I make amazake with mochi rice.

Kikko, I made some for you!

When it gets really really cold,

Ow

Look who's talking.

Yaa

Wow, take a look at your face, it's horrible!

relaxes your muscles too much.

howd

The days where it's below freezing last for about a week, even if the sun is out.

These past few days I've left the water running, even through the afternoon, to prevent it from freezing up.

Just a little bit longer.

7

And then, spring finally rolls around.

crack crack crack crack crack crack crack

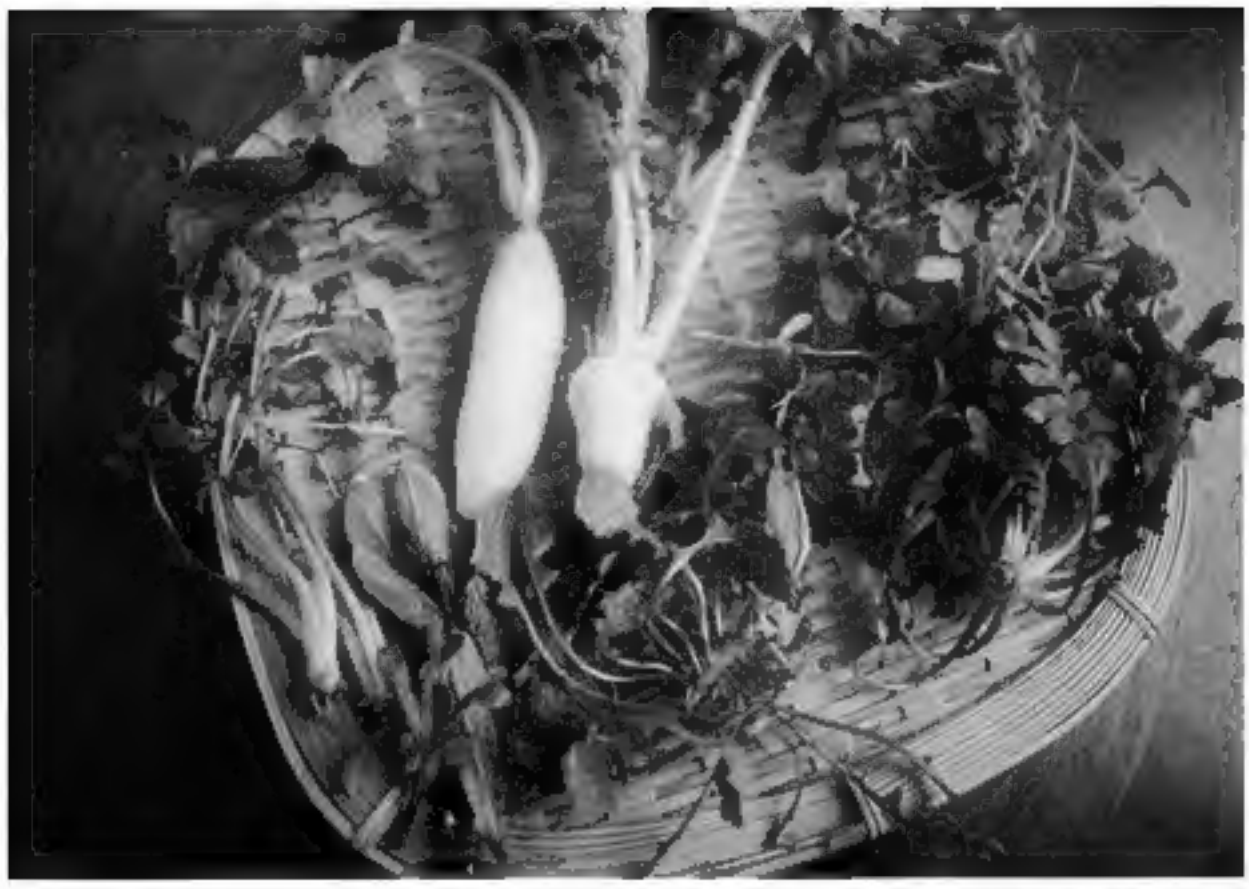
I used to prepare one more for my mother.

ぷしゅー

ぷしゅー

ぷしゅー

5th dish Amazake END



The seven herbs I put in my nanakusagayu.

It's handy to make amazake (sweet sake) in an enamel pickling container. It can be put straight onto the heat, so you can cook the rice gruel directly and then add in the koji (rice malt) once that cools. The more koji you add, the sweeter and more satisfying the amazake will become. Amazake made with equal parts rice and koji is especially delicious. I try to let it ferment until the very last second before it starts to turn sour.

The types of mice my cat kills are quite varied, and it even comes back with moles. I admire the sheer diversity of living creatures that exist, even around my own home.